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ABSTRACT

The public school system of Houston County, Georgia, has instituted an inservice staff development program planned by the teachers themselves. Following assessment of the needs of students and parents as well as teachers, the planning group designed a program offering college credit to participants. Houston County teachers now find it possible to work toward certification and accreditation, and can accumulate up to half the college credit required for a master's degree, all while remaining on the job. The program has led to higher student test scores, improvement in basic skills instruction, and a staff with increasing numbers of graduate degrees and no uncertified teachers. (Author/PGD)

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HOW INSERVICE PROGRAMS CAN IMPROVE STAFF PERFORMANCE

BY DAVID A. PERDUE

OF COURSE, THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF ANY SCHOOL SYSTEM'S INSERVICE OR STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS IMPROVING THE PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE OF BOTH TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS. SINCE IN-SERVICE EDUCATION IS ABOUT THE ONLY AVENUE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS HAVE FOR IMPROVING STAFF AFTER THEY LEAVE THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES UPON GRADUATION, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE IMPLEMENT STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WHICH IMPROVE STAFF, WHICH IN TURN WE ANTICIPATE WILL IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS THAT I BELIEVE ARE ESSENTIAL TO A SUCCESSFUL STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN ANY LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM. I SHOULD FIRST LIKE TO SUGGEST SOME OF THESE TO YOU AND THEN PROCEED TO DEMONSTRATE TO YOU HOW THE HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS ENDEAVORED TO IMPROVE STAFF PERFORMANCE THROUGH IN-SERVICE EDUCATION.

FIRST, TEACHERS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING STAGE AS WELL AS THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE.

SECOND, THE BEGINNING POINT OF A MEANINGFUL STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SHOULD IDENTIFY STUDENT NEEDS AS A RESULT OF A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT.

THIRD, STAFF DEVELOPMENT SHOULD AIM AT IMPLEMENTING SPECIFIC LOCAL ACTIVITIES OR PROGRAMS.

FOURTH, STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MEET THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF EACH LOCAL PROFESSIONAL.

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FIFTH, STAFF DEVELOPMENT TRAINING DESIGN SHOULD HAVE STRATEGIES TO CONVERT NEW KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE.

THE HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM FIRST BEGAN A COMPREHENSIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN 1973 WHEN THE STATE OF GEORGIA MADE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR LOCAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS; AT THE SAME TIME OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT MATCHED THESE STATE FUNDS SO THAT ADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT COULD BE GUARANTEED.

OUR FIRST STEP WAS A COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS. THE STUDENTS ASSESSED WERE SIXTH, EIGHTH, AND ELEVENTH GRADERS; THERE WAS RANDOM SAMPLING OF PARENTS OF THESE STUDENTS; FINALLY THERE WAS AN ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF. THE RESULTS OF THIS NEEDS ASSESSMENT WERE USED TO GIVE DIRECTION TO OUR PLANNING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. SIMPLY, HOW COULD A PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM HELP TO PROVIDE THE KIND OF SCHOOLS OUR STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS SAY WE NEEDED?

BASED UPON THE SYSTEMATIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM, THE HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM DETERMINED THAT ITS STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR 1974-75 WOULD BE TO ESTABLISH A LABORATORY COURSE COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVE TEACHERS WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY WOULD BE TO ASSESS THE NEEDS OF TEACHERS TO MEET THE PRIORITY NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

1. DEVELOP SKILLS IN READING, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING.
2. DEVELOP PRIDE IN WORK AND A FEELING OF SELF-WORTH.

3. LEARN TO RESPECT AND GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE WITH WHOM WE WORK AND LIVE.

4. LEARN HOW TO USE AND EXAMINE INFORMATION.

5. DEVELOP A DESIRE FOR LEARNING NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

IN ORDER TO PLAN CAREFULLY THE PILOT M. ED. PROGRAM FOR HOUSTON COUNTY WHICH WAS INHERENT IN THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SUBMITTED BY THE COUNTY AND APPROVED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TWO GROUPS OF HOUSTON COUNTY TEACHERS WERE SELECTED. THESE TWO GROUPS, ONE ELEMENTARY AND ONE SECONDARY, EACH CONSTITUTED A CLASS AND ENROLLED IN A SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE. THESE GROUPS, REPRESENTING THEIR FACULTIES AS "STEERING COMMITTEES," MET PERIODICALLY, SOMETIMES IN THE AFTERNOONS AND SOMETIMES DURING THE DAY ON RELEASED TIME, TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL THE PROJECT. THEY ATTEMPTED TO ASSESS FURTHER STUDENT NEEDS, RELATED TEACHER COMPETENCIES, AND THE WAY A SPECIAL GRAUDATE PROGRAM MIGHT BE DESIGNED TO YIELD THESE DESIRED OUTCOMES. ACTIVITIES INCLUDED WERE (1) REVIEWING EXISTING STATE CRITERIA AND COLLEGE REGULATIONS REGARDING GRADUATE WORK, (2) ANALYZING EXISTING COURSE SYLLABI, (3) DEVELOPING AND ADMINISTERING SURVEY INSTRUMENTS TO FACULTY AND STUDENTS, (4) VISITING EXISTING CENTER PROGRAMS, (5) INTERVIEWING STATE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL, COLLEGE FACULTY, HOUSTON COUNTY OFFICIALS AND OTHERS, AND (6) WRITING DESCRIPTIONS FOR PROPOSED COURSES OR EXPERIENCES.

THE COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS, ONE ELEMENTARY AND ONE SECONDARY, COORDINATED THE CLASSES, SERVED AS RESOURCE PERSONS, AND VISITED IN THE COUNTY SCHOOLS.

THE HOUSTON COUNTY STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLAN WHICH FINALLY EMERGED MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR SEVERAL THINGS TO OCCUR THAT CURRENTLY ARE NOT POSSIBLE UNDER EXISTING POLICIES. SIGNIFICANT ARE THESE:

1. ALLOWING A SCHOOL SYSTEM TO SUBMIT A PROGRAM FOR APPROVAL THAT HAS EMERGED FROM THE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND NEEDS OF A SCHOOL SYSTEM.
2. PROVIDING MEANS FOR A LOCAL SYSTEM TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF LOCAL EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL BY OFFERING A PROGRAM OF COURSES THAT ARE EXPERIENCE CENTERED AND RELEVANT TO PUPIL AND TEACHER NEEDS.
3. ASSISTING EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL IN ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTITUDES THAT WILL MEET IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF A GIVEN STUDENT POPULATION THROUGH COURSE OFFERINGS THAT PROVIDE INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES WITH EMPHASIS ON FIELD-BASED ACTIVITIES.
4. PROVIDING A PROGRAM IN THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT OF HOUSTON COUNTY. THIS PROGRAM DIFFERS IN THAT IT WOULD ESTABLISH "CAMPUS CREDIT: WITHIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT."

THE STEERING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT THE PROGRAM BE ADOPTED AS A BASIC PLAN FOR HOUSTON COUNTY TEACHERS TO UTILIZE FOR UPGRADING CERTIFICATES AND FOR WORKING TOWARD A MASTER OF EDUCATION OR A SPECIALIST IN EDUCATION DEGREE.

SINCE 1973, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF OUR STAFF DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS THAT WE FEEL HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO IMPROVED STAFF PERFORMANCE?

1. IN THE SUMMER OF 1974 WE INVOLVED 160 CLASSROOM TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, AND CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF IN A SIX-WEEKS' WORKSHOP DESIGNED TO IMPROVE STAFF COMPETENCIES IN DIAGNOSING AND REMEDIATING READING DIFFICULTIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN.
2. IN THE SUMMER OF 1975 WE INVOLVED 120 CLASSROOM TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, AND CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF IN A SIX-WEEKS' WORKSHOP DESIGNED TO IMPROVE STAFF COMPETENCIES IN WORKING WITH DISADVANTAGED YOUTH.
3. SINCE THE SCHOOL YEAR 1974-75 WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF COLLEGE COURSES FOR TEACHERS WHICH ENABLES TEACHERS TO MEET STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS, TO MEET ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ADDITIONAL COURSE WORK, AND TO OBTAIN ½ OF THE COLLEGE CREDIT COURSES REQUIRED FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE. ALL OF THESE COLLEGE CREDIT COURSES HAVE BEEN OFFERED IN HOUSTON COUNTY AT ½ THE COST TO TEACHERS.
4. BEGINNING IN 1976 WE BEGAN A SERIES OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO IMPROVE TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES TO TEACH THE BASIC SKILLS. A FEW EXAMPLES --

THE TEACHING OF READING

MATERIALS AND METHODS IN TEACHING
SOCIAL STUDIES
SCIENCE
MATHEMATICS

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION

5. THESE SAME STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES WILL CONTINUE INTO 1979-80.

TEACHING OF READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS

TEACHING ART IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

TEACHING SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

6. BEGINNING JULY 1, 1976, THE STATE OF GEORGIA BEGAN TO REQUIRE OF EACH TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, AND GUIDANCE COUNSELOR A FIVE-HOUR COURSE IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN. THROUGH STAFF DEVELOPMENT COURSES THE HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS ENABLED EACH PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER TO MEET THIS REQUIREMENT.

7. IN THE SUMMER OF 1977 THE HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM BEGAN A SERIES OF THREE-DAY WORKSHOPS IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS. PERSONNEL RECEIVE A $30 A DAY STIPEND TO ATTEND THESE WORKSHOPS: THEY MAY CONTINUE DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH A FIVE-HOUR CREDIT COURSE IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AT NO COST. BY THE END OF THIS SUMMER SOME 220 JUNIOR HIGH TEACHERS WILL HAVE RECEIVED INTENSIVE TRAINING IN MAINTAINING POSITIVE DISCIPLINE AND ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

8. DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR 1977-78 STAFF FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONDUCTED A COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM IN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT. THIS NEEDS ASSESSMENT REFLECTED THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL INSERVICE SUPPORT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS. THIS SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED AND 100 KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS AND AIDES HAVE NOW RECEIVED ADDITIONAL TRAINING WITH SUPERVISION ON THE JOB BY UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS.

9. IN 1977-78 STAFF FROM THE MATHEMATICS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONDUCTED A YEAR-LONG EVALUATION OF MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF HOUSTON COUNTY. ONE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS WAS STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN METHODS OF TEACHING MATHEMATICS SKILLS. DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR 78-79 ONE TEACHER FROM EACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WAS SELECTED TO ATTEND IN-SERVICE SESSIONS ON TEACHING MATH SKILLS; THESE TEACHERS THEN RETURNED TO THEIR SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE THE SAME TRAINING FOR OTHER STAFF MEMBERS.

10. AN ANNUAL ONE WEEK'S WORKSHOP FOR PRINCIPALS AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS IS HELD EACH SUMMER TO KEEP ADMINISTRATORS INFORMED OF TRENDS AND ISSUES IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION. AN EXTENDED YEAR-LONG IN-SERVICE PROGRAM HAS ENABLED INTERESTED PRINCIPALS TO OBTAIN SIXTH-YEAR DEGREES.

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THIS IS A RATHER BRIEF SAMPLING OF OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE STAFF PERFORMANCE. BUT WHAT EVIDENCE DO WE HAVE THAT STAFF PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN IMPROVED?

A. HOUSTON COUNTY STUDENTS SCORE AT STATE AVERAGE AND ABOVE ON CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS.

B. WE HAVE NO UNCERTIFIED TEACHERS IN HOUSTON COUNTY.

C. HOUSTON COUNTY TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN INCREASING NUMBERS ARE COMPLETING GRADUATE DEGREES.

D. EVALUATION SURVEYS AND COMMITTEES CONFIRM WE ARE DOING A BETTER THAN AVERAGE JOB IN TEACHING BASIC SKILLS.